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according to the amount of work to be done, stand at a semi-circular table, of large dimensions, round which 150 boxes and bags are hung open-mouthed, each bearing the name of the place to which the bag or its contents are to be dispatched. The newspapers shovelled out on the table, the clerk begins at once to throw them into the bags, and though the movements of his hands are so rapid that you have some difficulty in following them, and many of the boxes are several yards from him, he never misses his aim. Long experience has endowed him with such dexterity, that he could take up a newspaper and throw it into the centre of any one of the 150 bags in less time than you would take to read the address.

The number of clerks and carriers employed at the New York Post-office is 160—too few for the business to be done. Forty-four of these are actual carriers, employed in the distribution of letters through the city. Nine clerks and a chief are employed at the distribution boxes, of which the office contains 3,537. Professors of mnemotechny might learn a lesson from these young men, who, after a very short apprenticeship, remember the name of the owner of each of these 3,537 boxes so well that they scarcely ever need to consult the label which contains it. Poor fellows! they are not to be envied. During four days of the week they are "due" at the office at 5 A.M., and are not released till 7 P.M.; and the remaining three days, though comparative holidays to them, would appear days of severe toil to many of us. Nothing can be better managed than the general distribution office. Two windows are appropriated to the purpose; one for letters whose address falls under the letters A to J inclusive, the other for those whose address begins with any letter from K to Z. Within, a clerk stands at each window, in front of a large rack, containing 120 pigeon-holes, and revolving on a pivot, and is thus able, without changing his position or losing time, to select the letter inquired for from one of the 120 boxes. A little further on, another window is specially appropriated to ladies, whom the proverbial gallantry of Americans could not suffer to be jostled in a crowd of men.

There is no dead-letter office at New York. After letters have lain three months in the office, and been duly advertised, they are sent to Washington, there to be opened and returned to the writer, if no clue to the recipient can be obtained.

It is but just to say that complaints are often justly made against the New York Post-office. Letters have been known to find their way to the dead-letter office in a most mysterious way; in some cases, it is asserted, after the anxious recipient has called repeatedly at the distribution office. Delays, too, in the delivery of letters are not unfrequent, and the slightest error in the direction is sufficient, in the eyes of the clerks,

fully to excuse similar mistakes. These inconveniences may probably be ascribed in the first place to the want of a sufficient number of clerks, and secondly to their inadequate remuneration.

The mail is always the slowest traveller in the United States. It is incomprehensible how a people, for whom the swiftest modes of locomotion are too slow, can permit their correspondence to daudle along the road like a lazy pedlar. A traveller starting from Montreal with the mail can always reach New York many hours, and in winter a day or two, in advance of it; and no one seems to know where the delay occurs. The extent to which the telegraph is used by men of business may perhaps explain, in a measure, the indifference with which this mismanagement is tolerated; but it is not the less a grievous inconvenience, which reflects no credit on the authorities.

Nothing is more wanted in New York than local sub-post-offices. When the church in Nassau-street was in the centre of the city, it would have been an easy matter for every one to visit it once a day; but now that three-fourths of the residents live at a great distance from the centre of traffic, it is no slight annoyance to be obliged to travel two or three miles to mail or inquire for a letter. Two or three individuals have endeavoured to turn the deficiency to account by establishing private post-offices on their own responsibility. But they are entirely independent of the control of the postmaster, and hold out no security to letter-writers. The residents of Union-square and the vicinity have learned by experience that it is safer to pay a messenger to carry letters to the Nassau-street office, than to confide them to the tender mercies of the self-dubbed postmaster who has set up an office in the square.

He who would view the New York Post-office to advantage should visit it on St. Valentine's-day. Foreigners have no idea of the veneration with which the custom of sending valentines is preserved in the Empire City. People have been known to give as much as 500 dollars for a single valentine, and the fashionables think they are committing no extravagance in buying several sheets of laced and satin paper with embroidered flowers, gilt mottoes, and silver doves, &c., at from twenty dollars to fifty dollars a-piece. On the 14th, he is a patient man who makes his way to the Post-office window. Crowds of valentines throng the way. Gaudy billets, and boxes of all sorts of shapes, freighted with love-verses, are rapidly transferred from the by-standers to the clerk, and a little higher up, from the official to the eager hands of some expectant damsel, who runs flutteringly home with her prize. A pleasant scene for a dry, hard man of business to contemplate!

BURGOS AND ITS CATHEDRAL.

THOUGH the once populous city of Burgos were to see its remaining population dwindle away to the number whence sprang all the inhabitants of the earth, it would none the less continue to hold its name of city, and would never cease to stop the traveller on his way, for its cathedral is a city in itself, a shrine at which every lover of art will always be ready to offer up his devotions, though it take him miles out of his road to do so.

The Cathedral of Burgos, which, according to some authors, was began in 1221, under Ferdinand III., was not finished before the sixteenth century. It is at present one of the finest monuments of Gothic art in Spain. The two towers of its façade are surmounted by spires most richly sculptured. The engraving, after the picture by Roberts, a contemporary painter, represents the cathedral staircase, the architectural decoration of which is most elaborate. It is by this staircase that the faithful who inhabit the northern part of the city descend into the transept of the cathedral. In order to understand the disposition of the staircase, the reader must bear in mind that Burgos is situated on the declivity of a hill, the summit

of which was formerly crowned by a castle built by Diego Porcelos in 884, under Alphonso III., but which is now in ruins. The inhabitants of the city then lived near the summit of the hill, but they gradually removed further off; and now the highest street of the modern city is the lowest one of the ancient city. The side of the cathedral which is turned towards the bottom of the hill is entirely free from obstruction, and overlooks Burgos; but the northern side is, on the contrary, masked, for the most part, by the hill, and overlooked by streets. The staircase establishes a rapid and easy communication between these streets and the interior of the edifice. This staircase is remarkable for the elegance of its design, and for the richness, splendour, and variety of its details. The light, which enters but faintly, increases the general effect, by imparting an air of mystery to the intricate workmanship of the decorations; the ray of light ingeniously thrown into the picture by the artist comes from a window which is not seen in the engraving. It was in 1832 that Mr. Roberts made at Burgos the sketch of his picture, which is now at the Vernon Gallery in London.

The various chapels of the cathedral are very magnificent, being full of good sculpture, tombs, and painted glass. The grandest of all is that of *del Condestable*, which was erected as the burial-place of the Velasco family, the hereditary constables of Castile. This rich florid Gothic *Capilla* is as large as some churches, and is admirable both inside and outside, as its pinnacles, or *agujas*, form a charming cluster, and correspond with the spires. The entrance is very striking. A solid buttress, piers, and wreathed pillars, enriched with niche-work, and children supporting carvings under glorious canopies, impart to it an air of grandeur. The white stone forms an admirable material for some beautiful sculpture which is attributed to Juan de Barga. The subjects are the "Agony of the Saviour;" the "Bearing the Cross;" the "Crucifixion," which is the best; the "Resurrection;" and the "Ascension." The engrailed edges of the archway form a rich lace-like frame, under which the light, simple, and cheerful chapel is seen, with its tombs and heraldic decorations. Before the *retablo* reposes the founder, Pedro Hernandez de Velasco, who died in 1492; and his wife, at whose feet is a dog, the emblem of her fidelity, and who died in 1500, lies by his side. These fine tombs were sculptured in Italy in 1540; the costumes, armour, lace-work, and details of them are magnificent.

Burgos is built in the shape of an irregular semicircle, and has large portions of its ancient walls still remaining. The grand gate of Santa Maria is massive, being strengthened with bartizan turrets and battlements, and the whole pile is crowned by an image of the Virgin. Charles V. added the statues of Burgales worthies, which are grouped in niches round his own, namely, Don Diego Porcelos, Fernan Gonzales, the Cid, Nuno Rasura, and Lain Calvo. The river Arlanzon flows through planted walks to the *Isla*, and then continues its course down to the *Vega*, while, higher up, is the *Espolon* or *Esplanada*, which, with its gardens, was laid out by the Marquis de Villena. Statues of Fernan Gonzales and Alonzo III., Henrique III., and Ferdinand I., were placed there by Charles III. There is a white, regular, modern row of houses on the *Espolon*, which encase the ancient town like a new binding does an old book, and form a strange contrast with the dark, irregular lanes behind, and the gloomy, fortress-like mansions in the Calle Alta, San Lorenzo, Avellanosa, San Juan, and older quarters.

Burgos has a miraculous crucifix, called *el Christo de Burgos*. It is said that a Burgales merchant found the figure steering itself into the Bay of Biscay; and, on being placed in the Augustine convent, it worked so many miracles that the archbishop wished to remove it to the cathedral, but it walked back twice. Previously to the French invasion, the chaplain used to tell the populace that its beard grew as regularly as his own. Marshal Bessières, who had been a barber's boy, laughed, however, at the beard, and carried off a crown of gold, which had been offered by the Conde de Urena, just as Dionysius relieved Esculapius of his golden beard only. The image had, long before, shaken the diadem off its head, and it was placed in consequence at its feet. According to the best authorities, it was carved by Nicodemus out of supernatural materials: but to others it appears to be graven out of Sorian pine, and either by Becerra or Hernandez. Be this as it may, as a work of art it is admirable, and the expression of suffering in the head drooping over the shoulder is very fine.

There are certain names which are connected one with the other by the most indissoluble ties. Such is the name of Burgos, at present a poor city, which formerly possessed thirty-five thousand inhabitants, but which does not now contain more than eight or nine thousand. Burgos is not the city of Fernan Gonzales, who was its first count, nor of Don Alphonso, who was its first king: it is the city of the Cid alone, who was its most illustrious offspring, and with whose name it will ever remain associated.

Burgos resembles a boundless echo incessantly repeating the same word, and the name which Burgos repeats is that of the Cid. The exploits of the husband of Dona Ximena are sounded in the ears of the traveller as soon as he has

passed through the gates of the city; and the deeds of the illustrious hero are still related to him as he traverses its streets, and is visiting its monuments. Let him interrogate the first child he meets about the Cid Campeador, and this child, though he is perhaps ignorant of the name of the sovereign who now occupies the throne of Charles the Fifth, will tell him that the name of the Cid Campeador was Rodrigo, and that he was born in the Castle of Vilar, in 1026: he will also tell him why he was called the Cid; how he forced King Alphonso to swear, in the Church of St. Gadea, that he had nothing to do with the murder of Don Sanchez; how he was banished by King Alphonso: how, when about to set out to the land of his exile, he borrowed of two Jews a thousand florins on a chest full of sand; how he effected a reconciliation with the king; how his death was announced to him by St. Peter; and how, after his death, his esquire, Gil Diaz, placed him, in accordance with his last wishes, on his horse Babieca, with his sword Tizona in his hand; and how the Moors, thinking him still alive, took to flight on thus beholding him, and left twenty of their kings dead on the field of battle.

The whole character of the Cid may be summed up in the following legend:—

"The father of the Cid set out one day to go and kiss the hand of the good king, Don Ferdinand, and took with him three hundred noblemen, among whom was Rodrigo, the proud Castilian.

"All were mounted on mules, with the exception of Rodrigo, who was on horseback; all were arrayed in garments of gold and silk, with the exception of Rodrigo, who was encased in steel; all carried a switch in their hands, but Rodrigo held in his a lance; all wore perfumed gloves, but Rodrigo wore well-wrought gauntlets; all had on beaver or velvet hats, while Rodrigo alone wore a casque of steel surmounted with a purple aigret.

"As they were going along, they met the king, whose attendants, while talking to one another, said:

"'Among those noblemen is the man who killed Count Locano.'

"Rodrigo heard them, looked them full in the face, and said, in a loud and haughty tone: 'If there is among you any one who is either his relation or his ally, and who is dissatisfied with his death, let him immediately step forth and demand satisfaction. I will meet him either on foot or on horseback.'

"But they all replied at the same time: 'May the devil demand satisfaction of you, if it suits him, Rodrigo; as to ourselves, such is not our intention.'

"All the noblemen who were with the father of the Cid now dismounted from their mules, to kiss the hand of the king. Rodrigo alone remained firmly seated on his horse. Then his father said to him: 'Dismount, Rodrigo, and kiss the hand of the king; for the king is my sovereign, and you are my son—that is, my vassal.'

"Rodrigo took great offence at these words, and the words in which he replied to his father are those of a proud and courageous man. 'If,' said he, 'any other but you had thus addressed me, he would have already atoned for his boldness; but as it is you who command it, I will immediately obey.'

"And Rodrigo dismounted, to kiss the hand of the king. But at the moment he was about to kneel down, his dagger slipped out of its scabbard, and fell to the ground.

"The king, greatly terrified, drew back a step, and said in a voice full of emotion: 'Begone, Rodrigo! begone, demon! you, whose features are those of a man, while your behaviour is that of a wild beast; begone, I say!'

"At these words, Rodrigo rose up quickly, and instantly asked for his horse, in a voice choking with anger; then, turning to the king, he said:—

"'Know, Sire, that I consider it no honour for me to kiss the hand of the king, and I look upon myself as insulted, because my father has done so.'

Having thus spoken, he left the place, and was followed by the three hundred noblemen who had come with his father.

"They went away effeminately attired, to come back well armed; and they left on mules, to return on horses."

The life of the Cid (from the Arabic *El Seid*, "the Lord,") was a continued series of combats with the Moors, who occupied by far the largest and richest parts of the country. He first attacked them in Aragon, and then extended his conquests to Valencia, of which kingdom he took the capital, and held it until his death, which happened about 1099.

THE BEAUTIFUL.

THE disposition and capacity to distinguish and interest ourselves in the *true*, the *beautiful*, the *good*, and the *great*, were given us as a rule and law, continually to point out that election and conduct which is most becoming and most conformable to our nature as moral agents; and nothing can be more certain, than that the interest we take in all the objects which surround us, is (*ceteris paribus*) in an exact proportion to the number and degree of those qualities, whether considered singly or combined.

As to *beauty*, prudence may and often does incline us to hesitate in our election of the greater or lesser degree of it, in proportion to the association of those degrees of beauty with other valuable or worthless qualities. These ideas of beauty, order, and goodness have an intimate and almost immediate reference to each other in the mind; as absolute and complete satisfaction can only result from the perfect union of all these qualities in their highest degree. Therefore it is that the pleasure which we receive in the contemplation of human nature (where beauty may be in a high degree united with those other qualities) is much greater than that which results from the contemplation of beauty in all the species of animal, vegetable, or other objects, where moral agency does not exist: and yet, such is the innate force of power of mere beauty, even in the lowest order of beings, that the particular perfections discoverable amongst quadrupeds, birds, fishes, trees, and flowers are sure to excite in us agreeable sensations, and incline us to a predilection and choice, of which those irrational beings appear utterly unconscious and insensible.

There is, then, a *beautiful* which is positive, essential, and independent of national or temporary institutions or opinions. This immutable and (if I may be allowed the expression)

eternal beauty is widely different from those arbitrary, local, temporary notions of beauty which have a kind of occasional currency under the terms *ton*, *fashion*, or *mode*, and, like particular languages, are ever fluctuating and unstable, always different amongst the different nations, and in the different ages of the same nation. This *false* beauty, which roots itself in affectation, has nothing to do with genuine legitimate art, and is no otherwise worth mention here, than to point it out as a quicksand, where many ingenious artists have been sunk for ever. It cannot therefore be too studiously avoided, for though a conformity with those temporary modes may gratify our employers, and the circle around them, and consequently be advantageous to what we may call our interest, yet it must lose us the admiration of men of sound judgment in all times; and all the future frivolities will have fashionable affectations and beauties of their own, quite different from those upon which our attention had been wasted.

Another source of confusion, though less general in its influence, arises from the sensuality which some people mix with their ideas of beauty. A high degree of the luscious, the languid—a simper, or leer—though associated with ordinary qualities, will, with them, outweigh all other perfections of body or mind. However, the judgment of those voluptuaries has but little weight with the bulk of mankind; like misers absorbed in one particular passion, they are regarded as blind and dead to every thing else. But the beautiful, which makes so essential a part in the design of a great artist, is, and must be, founded on the unalterable nature of things, and independent of all particular dispositions.

Men have differed more in their definition and manner of explaining beauty, than in their ideas of it. According to the definitions generally given, beauty consists of unity and gradual variety; or unity, variety, and harmony. This may be admitted as true, at least as far as it goes: but it is neither full nor satisfactory; for though it be certain that unity and variety are found in beautiful objects of all kinds,—in flowers, fruits, in the several species of animals as well as in human nature—yet it is equally certain that they are compounded differently, and that though in any one of these species we may further increase the variety, or simplify the unity, yet we should not proportionably add to the beauty, but the contrary.—*Barry's Lectures.*

THE CHINESE EMPEROR, MIEN-NING.

THE Chinese are forbidden under severe penalties to possess portraits of their emperors. This prohibition gives rise, as might be expected, to an illicit and fraudulent traffic, from which large profits are obtained. Fancy sketches in imperial robes are offered to strangers in an underhand and mysterious manner, purporting to be portraits of his celestial majesty. From two to five dollars are in this way often obtained for a water-colour drawing not worth more than half-a-dollar. Our engraving, however, is not taken from one of these, but is a faithful portrait of Mien-ning, the predecessor of the reigning emperor. The original portrait, about ten inches in diameter, belonged to Pann-se-chin, one of the imperial commissioners joined with Ki-ing in the negotiations between the Chinese and the French government. It was taken in the palace at Peking during a religious ceremony by one of Pann-se-chinn's friends, a high officer of the court. Pann was on intimate terms with the interpreter of the embassy, to whom he presented the drawing, which, to use his own expression, was eight-tenths of a perfect likeness. Mien-ning gave his reign the name of *taou kouang* (the light of reason). He was the 241st emperor of China, and the sixth of the Mandchoue race, and of the Ta-tsing dynasty. He was born in 1780, and was the grandson of Kaou-tsoung, who became emperor in 1796, and reigned under the name of Kia-king till 1820. Mien-ning distinguished himself before his accession to the throne by an act of great intrepidity. Sin-tsing, the first eunuch of the palace, had become the favourite of Kia-king, and had acquired such influence over his master,

that he took upon himself most of the affairs of the administration. This exercise of power excited his ambition, and inspired him with the design of seizing on the throne, and putting the emperor and his sons to death. While Kia-king and the princes were out hunting, he surrounded the palace with troops, and as soon as the emperor had returned he gave the signal of revolt. But in the meantime, without the knowledge of the rebels, Mien-ning had remained concealed in the palace, and perceived at a glance the object the eunuch had in view in concentrating the soldiers upon the palace. As soon, therefore, as he saw him entering at their head, he rammed down one of the round copper buttons of his coat into a musket, and covering the traitor with a steady aim, shot him dead. His followers instantly took to flight upon seeing their leader fall.

Kia-king died in 1820; his eldest son had preceded him to the tomb, and Mien-ning therefore, was proclaimed emperor on the 28th of August, 1820. He died at Peking, in February, 1850, on the 14th day of the first moon of the thirtieth year of his reign. It was marked by some of the most important events in Chinese history. Twelve years after the suppression of Tchang-koe's rebellion in the provinces of Ili, China had for the first time to contend against a European nation, and, being vanquished, to submit to harsh conditions of peace. It was caused, as all our readers know, by the unjustifiable attempts of the British to force opium into the country against the wish of the Chinese authorities. The war commenced in November, 1839, and was closed in August, 1842, by the treaty